

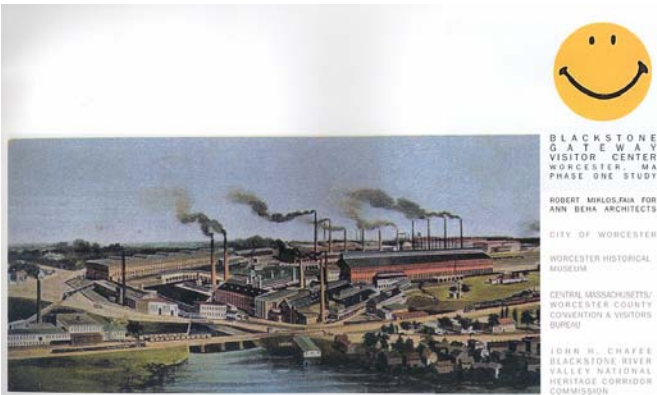
Commission News



An Update to the Commissioners of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission

**Full Commission Meeting December 8, 2005
Alternatives, Whitinsville, MA**

NORTHERN GATEWAY VISITOR CENTER



Cover of Visitor Center Report

With notice of the federal funding (\$6.4M) toward the Visitor Center announced this summer, the Northern Gateway Visitor Center project is moving ahead. The Blackstone Gateway Visitor Center Phase One Study was released in September through a partnership between the Corridor Commission, the Worcester Historical Museum, and the Central Massachusetts/Worcester County Convention and Visitors Bureau, working with Ann Beha Architects. Currently the Visitor Center Task Force and the Visitor Center Development Committee's focus is on identifying the required state match to the federal funding and assuring the additional funds are in place to begin the construction phase of the visitor center. A memorandum of understanding between the City of Worcester, the Worcester Historical Museum, and the Central Massachusetts/Worcester County Convention and Visitors Bureau is being drafted. If you are in the area, see how the road work surrounding the future Visitor Center site has made for a changing landscape. Millbury Street through Quinsigamond Village is now renamed Blackstone River Road with its connection at Route 146 just closed to make way for the recent opening of the McKeon Road extension directly to Route 146 at

Providence Street. All of this work, along with the future route of the bikeway, the presence of the canal, and the location at the Blackstone River's headwaters, and an engaged neighborhood makes this an active area of Quinsigamond Village in Worcester.

HASSANAMESIT WOODS

The Town of Grafton at a recent Town Meeting passed two articles requesting additional funds for important preservation work at Hassanamesit Woods. The money approved would include a more intensive Phase II archaeological study and the complete funding for a Preservation Master Plan that would lay-out a "road map" for development of the Hassanamesit Woods site as an historical, educational and recreational resource. The two articles, totaling \$117,000, comes from the Community Preservation Fund. It is an effort by the community to understand the full historical, educational and recreation value of the 200 acre property.

The Corridor Commission authorized \$15,000 for the Preservation Master Plan / Cultural resource Study and that authorization has leveraged for every federal dollar spent 7.8 dollars of additional outside funds. The Corridor is continuing to provide technical assistance with Joanna Doherty playing an important role in working with the Hassanamesit Woods Management Committee as they develop the RFP for the Master Plan Study. Ranger Chuck Arning continues as the Project Manager. Both Community Planner Joanna Doherty and Ranger Chuck Arning will be involved with the Plan as it also includes an inventory of the landscape's natural and cultural resources.

This project started with a \$25,000 Hot Spot Planning authorization that leveraged through the assistance of the Trust for Public Land, the Grafton Land Trust, the Town of Grafton and DCR the final purchase price of over \$2.5 million dollars, quite a remarkable achievement.

GREENWAY CHALLENGE



The runners, paddlers, and cyclists from Wild Bird Gardens set the pace for the 71-team field as they flew through the 54-mile course in just 4 hours and 12 minutes to win the Championship Division of the 2005 Greenway Challenge. Defending champions Great Canadian Canoe finished

third behind second place Fuss & O'Neil Team 2.

Blue skies, warm temperatures, and the turning leaves provided a perfect setting for the runners, cyclists, and paddlers as they made their way through the three paddling legs, two running segments, and two cycling legs of this popular adventure race. This year's race started on the Common in Grafton, Massachusetts and wound its way through Northbridge, Sutton, Douglas, Uxbridge, Blackstone, and Woonsocket before finishing in Lincoln, Rhode Island.

Eighteen tri-athletes completed the entire race on their own with Eric Bascombe from Cumberland, RI taking top honors among the men and Jennifer Shultis from Lexington, MA finishing first among the women.

The Corporate Cup, which is made up of teams of co-workers from the same organization, went to the Rhode Island Department of Transportation team. And RJ Duclos Painting from Whitinsville, MA picked up the trophy among the all-women teams.

Each year race organizers alter the course to give participants a new look at the Blackstone River Valley that spans Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The Valley was designated as a National Heritage Corridor by Congress in 1986 in honor of the area's heritage as the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution and features some of the most beautiful landscapes in New England.

The Greenway Challenge supports the students of the Blackstone Valley Youth Leadership Academy, which teaches Rhode Island and Massachusetts high school students how to be good stewards of the watershed.

Next year's event will be held on September 30, 2006.
STAFF CONTACT – BARBARA DIXON.

BLACKSTONE VALLEY INSTITUTE

Leadership Blackstone Valley

The 2005/2006 Class of Leadership Blackstone Valley was kicked off on October 20th with a "Meet the Partners" retreat. Coordinator Beckley Alley of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce has 25 participants. Class members will take part in sessions like the "Changing Face of" or "Preserving the Natural Resources of the Blackstone Valley". The class will get the opportunity to learn about various aspects of preservation, the environment and culture. They will also get to rub elbows with LBV alumni. Over the course of the class, participants will get to meet up to 50 local and state decision makers. Other highlights will include a new session on Transportation in the Valley. This will give the class the opportunity to learn about the bikeway and how transportation has an impact on the growth of the valley. Commissioners are welcome to attend as observers. Please contact Beckley Alley at the Blackstone Valley Chamber at 508.234.9090. STAFF CONTACT – HALFORD WELCH

Weathering the Storm

A group representing watershed interests met under the mast of the Coalition to discuss impacts of the recent flooding events attributed to the recent storms of October. Parts of the river valley received over 15 inches of rain in a week's period of time causing significantly elevated water levels throughout the Corridor. The flood caused severe impacts to businesses and the environment alike. After several meetings the group has determined that the best method to manage future issues related to local flooding is to develop local strategies to encourage communities to adopt best management practices. To get feedback from the communities on local issues and a response, a workshop is planned for January 26 at a location to be determined. STAFF CONTACT – HALFORD WELCH.

TOURISM



Footsteps in History

Columbus Day Weekend 2005 was welcomed with a new heritage open house – Footsteps in History Preserve America Weekend. Footsteps was constructed to offer the opportunity to marry heritage with tourism sites for the purpose of education,

enjoyment and economic development. Despite the rain of a Century over 4000 persons turned out to experience over 120 historic sites and programs throughout Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Many were greeted with interpreters in period dress and

with custom interpretation. The project was a partnership between the Heritage Corridor, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce. Preserve America and the National Trust helped to sponsor the development of the program for the event.

A well attended follow-up meeting was held at the Museum of Work and Culture on November 30th. The group strongly recommended continuation of the program and many volunteers were identified to assist with program development. In addition, Preserve America has encouraged the group to apply for a grant for program funding. Many thanks are also due to the Rhode Island Preservation & Heritage Commission for their support and assistance in the submission of the Preserve America grant application. Thanks are also due to Veronica Cadoppi, project manager and Lisa Moczinski, media consultant for their contributions and expertise. STAFF CONTACT - HALFORD WELCH.

Walking Ranger



Ranger Dan Wegner with Margaret Carrol in Millville, MA

From September 28 – October 4 Ranger Dan Wegner's walked the Blackstone Valley to promote Footsteps in History. Walkers joined the ranger at various times along the way. Some stops included members from partner groups including the Corridor Commission, National

Park Service, the media, and other interested individuals from the general public. Instant recognition by the members of the public was encountered along the route almost immediately after the first television and newspaper coverage. Requests by several Footsteps sites were made for the "Walking Ranger" on Columbus Day Weekend, including a prominent place in the Heritage Parade on Columbus Day in Central Falls, RI. In spite of rain on Columbus Day weekend, most activities were held and good attendance was experienced at many sites. The walk was a great lead up to the event and raised awareness of both the Corridor as well as valley-wide preservation issues. STAFF

CONTACT – DAN WEGNER.

Preserve America Reception and Summit

Veronica Cadoppi (left) with Bob Billington, Katherine Fox (Blackstone Chamber Tourism Committee) and Commission



Chair Louise Redding welcome visitors to the ASA Waters Mansion.

After the walking ranger, the Collaborative held a reception to kick off the Footsteps event. In addition to the weekend open house the Tourism Collaborative hosted a well attended October 4 reception at the Asa Waters Mansion in Millbury, MA. Speaker, Ron Anzalone from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, offered welcoming comments from Preserve America. Over 100 persons from historic and tourism sites throughout the valley were in attendance. STAFF CONTACT – HALFORD WELCH.

Hospitality Training



The Heritage Corridor provided tourism and hospitality training to over 30 volunteers from the Providence and Warwick Convention and Visitor bureau at the Blackstone River Theater on November 3. The group was entertained by music of Pendragon and experienced the Winds of Change video. The effort was coordinated through the Heritage Corridor by Barbara

Dixon. Volunteers were able to get to know the Valley through numerous partners who exhibited at the event. The event provided an opportunity to grow the relationship with the group and better promote the Valley to a wider audience. STAFF CONTACT – BARBARA DIXON.

INTERPRETATION

Blackstone Valley Education Network to offer course for Teachers

Eighteen partners from the Blackstone Valley Education Network are offering a new course entitled Teaching the American Story through the Blackstone Valley this fall. Participating teachers will explore and experience sites offering educational programs across the Valley. Each week, participants will visit a different site, learn about their educational offerings, participate in selected activities, and will discover how to incorporate them into their classroom.

This course will allow educators to learn about some of the educational opportunities available in the Blackstone River Valley. Blackstone Valley sites have wonderful primary resources that cannot be found anywhere else, and they give students the chance to be exposed to real history. These sessions also give educators the opportunity to teach outside the boundaries of a classroom or textbook.

The course begins in February 2006. Doug Kimball of Massachusetts Audubon / Broad Meadow Brook organized this project with the assistance of a grant from the Heritage Corridor Commission. STAFF CONTACT – KEVIN KLYBERG.

Congratulation on 30,297 Volunteer Hours for 2005

The number of hours donated by our fantastic, dedicated VIP's grew by 10%!!

The 178 Active VIP's were, quite obviously, out and about in the Blackstone Valley sharing their talents and their time to make events throughout the Heritage Corridor run smoothly. The largest number of hours volunteered were related to Expedition 2005, the Clean Water Fest at Rhode Island College and the Greenway Challenge. Unique programs such as the Water Chestnut Cleanup and more traditional ones such as the Paddle Club, Winter Tracking and Maple Sugaring attracted loyal volunteers. This year, in fact, two programs were led by VIP's for the first time: Winter Photography and Snow Shoeing. A sincere thanks to all of you, hats off to all for a job well done!

All VIP storyboards are now included on the Corridor website at www.nps.gov/blac/who/vip/vip_scrapbook.html. Log on to see colorful storyboards of the activities you DID or didn't participate in over the past year. Reviewing the storyboards might be a good way to start considering "new-to-you" programs to join in the coming months. Learn about partner sites, special events, recreational resources, educational programs and natural resources volunteer opportunities. They are sure to inspire you to "Imagine Your Possibilities." Anyone wanting to share a story of VIP's in action should contact Ranger Suzanne. STAFF CONTACT – SUZANNE BUCHANAN.

STAFF NOTES

Sue Andrews



Sue Andrews, Director of Heritage Preservation and Development will be leaving the Heritage Corridor Commission on December 9 to take a new position as the Chief of Staff of Lowell National Historic Park. Sue has been in the Blackstone Valley for a decade and has also served as the Site Manager for the Roger Williams National Memorial. This will be Sue's second tour of duty at Lowell. Her National Park Service Career also includes time at Gettysburg, Independence Hall and even a

brief term at Alcatraz. During her time with the corridor, Sue has played an integral part in the development of the interpretive program at Blackstone. Her contributions will be missed.

Welcoming Tom Ross



Thomas E. Ross is our new Acting Deputy Director and Chief of Planning at the Heritage Corridor. Tom began his career with the National Park Service in 2000 as Community Planner for New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park (NHP). In 2001 he was promoted to his current position of Deputy Superintendent where he has been responsible for park planning, partnership development and all phases of operations management.

He has managed numerous partnership projects including the architectural up-lighting of key park buildings, installation of a Traveler's Information Station (TIS), development and installation of wayside exhibits and leader of a research team of park partners working internationally in the Azores, Portugal. He was a founding member of the award winning Art-History-Architecture (AHA!) monthly gallery night program in downtown New Bedford.

Currently he serves as a liaison to the Board of Directors for the Bristol County Convention and Visitors Bureau and is a member of a number of organizations including the Club Madeirense S.S. Sacramento, Inc., Friends of Buttonwood Park and the American Planning Association (APA).

Tom previously worked for the City of New Bedford as an Economic Development Specialist and a City Planner. Tom holds a double Bachelor's Degree in Geography and History from Bridgewater State College and a Master of Regional Planning from UMass Amherst. In August 2005 he graduated from the year long intensive USDA's Executive Leadership Program (ELP). He and his wife Kerrie live in New Bedford, MA and have one son, Cameron.

CALENDAR OF COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

Annual Dinner

January 26, 2006, Stormwater Conference – Location and Details Forthcoming.

February 16, 2006 – Annual Meeting – Central Falls Tentative – 7:00 pm.

March 30, 2006 - Annual Reception - Hogan Center Holy Cross College, Worcester, MA - Time To Be Determined.